

REMARKS

Claim Amendments

Applicants propose amending independent claims 39 and 57 to incorporate features recited in allowable dependent claims 51 and 70, respectively, and accordingly, cancelling claims 51 and 70 without prejudice or disclaimer of their subject matter. In addition, Applicants propose amending claims 41-43, 46, 52-56, and 71-73 to correct informalities. No new matter has been introduced. Upon entry of this Amendment, claims 39, 41-50, 52-57, 59-69, and 71-77 remain pending.

Final Office Action

In the Final Office Action, the Examiner took the following actions:

- (a) objected to claims 41-43, 46, 51, 55, and 56 for informalities;
- (b) rejected claims 39, 41-49, 56, 57, 59-68, and 75-77 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 7,237,264 ("Graham");
- (c) rejected claims 55 and 74 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Graham in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,182,146 ("Graham-Cumming"); and
- (d) objected to claims 50-54 and 69-73 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but indicated that they would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's indication that claims 50-54 and 69-73 contain allowable subject matter. *See* Final Office Action, pp. 6-7. In response, Applicants propose incorporating the subject matter of allowable claim 51 into independent claim 39, thereby rendering claim 39 allowable. Applicants also propose incorporating the allowable subject matter of claim 70 into independent claim 57, thereby rendering claim 57 allowable.

Objection to Claims 41-43, 46, 51, 55, and 56

The objection to claim 51 has been rendered moot by virtue of its cancellation. The Final Office Action objected to claims 41-43, 46, 55, and 56 because of informalities. *See* Final Office Action, p. 3. In response, Applicants propose amending claims 41-43, 46, 55, and 56 as suggested by the Examiner. Applicants therefore respectfully request withdrawal of the objection.

The Remaining §§ 102(e) and 103(a) Rejections

Without conceding to the allegations included in the §§ 102(e) and 103(a) rejections in the Final Office Action at pp. 3-6, Applicants propose amending independent claims 39 and 57 to include the allowable subject matter of claims 51 and 70, respectively. Therefore, independent claims 39 and 57 are allowable over the cited references. In addition, dependent claims 41-49, 55, 56, 59-68, and 74-77 are also allowable because of their respective dependence from base claim 39 or 57, and because they recite additional features not disclosed or suggested in the cited references. Applicants therefore respectfully request withdrawal of the rejections.

Conclusion

Applicants request entry of this Amendment, reconsideration of the application, and withdrawal of the objections and rejections. Pending claims 39, 41-50, 52-57, 59-69, and 71-77 are in condition for allowance, and Applicants request a favorable action.

Applicants submit that the proposed amendments do not raise new issues or necessitate the undertaking of any additional search of the art by the Examiner, since all of the elements and their relationships claimed were either earlier claimed or inherent in the claims as examined. Therefore, this Amendment after Final should allow for immediate action by the Examiner.

The Final Office Action contains a number of statements reflecting characterizations of the related art and the claims. Regardless of whether any such statements are identified herein, Applicants decline to automatically subscribe to any such statements or characterizations.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to Deposit Account No. 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: June 22, 2011

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